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To Whom it may Concern,

**Re: Assessment of the nesting raptors and LeConte's Thrasher on Bureau of Land Management Lands in Eastern Kern County, California.**

As Manager of the Kern River Preserve and a representative of Audubon California in Kern County I initially supported funding of an assessment of the nesting raptors on Bureau of Land Management Lands in Eastern Kern County, California. I felt that this information would be helpful to improving management, protection and restoration in this ecologically important area in the face of extensive and growing OHV use. Better understanding raptor populations and potential impacts of OHV recreation in this area could assist conservation organizations and BLM to better understand and manage these valuable resources. Such a study was funded in 2018 through an SVRA grant.

Similarly, I support the expansion of this study to include additional, recently identified areas with a high potential to support raptor nesting. Moreover, that current study has identified within the study area a modest population of the State-listed Species of Special Concern, LeConte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*). The broadening of this investigation, will help bring up to date occurrence information not only on raptorial birds (hawks, eagles, falcons, owls) - including two important sensitive species known to occur in the area: the Golden Eagle, a California Fully Protected Species, and the Western Burrowing Owl, a California species of Special Concern - but also the LeConte's Thrasher, whose populations are similarly in decline. Helping to determine if legal or illegal OHV use may be affecting any of these sensitive species and their breeding sites along with the possibility of developing protective measures such posting of signage, trail rerouting, or closures makes this sort of study both important and warranted.

Bill Haas (Pacific Coast Conservation) and Dan Cooper (Cooper Ecological Consulting) are well qualified to conduct this type of work.

Reed Tollefson/Manager

Audubon California Kern River Preserve